



18 April, 2016

STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF ZIMBABWE'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

ZIMBABWE PEACE PROJECT (ZPP) joins the rest of country in commemorating the nation's 36th anniversary of its independence. ZPP recognises and acknowledges that the independence of this country did not come easy. It took a protracted liberation struggle in which many gallant sons and daughters of the country lost their lives. Indeed such sacrifice is outstanding and ought to be commended by all. Without these men and women, living or dead, Zimbabwe would not have attained majority rule in 1980.

We are grateful for majority rule. We are thankful for milestones the country achieved in the past 36 years in various areas. And we commend government for all gains realised since 1980.

However, we bemoan the reversal of the gains of liberation which we have seen most significantly in the past 16 years. The deteriorated general state of affairs; the impoverishment of the masses; the snuffing out of democratic space; the repression of the people; a haphazard style of land distribution; unequal distribution of the nation's resources; as well as a biased empowerment model which is neither broad-based enough nor transparent are hardly what the gallant sons and daughters of the revolution went to war for!

We look around at the state of affairs in the country and in particular are disappointed with the following:

- Political violence that continues to rear its ugly head across the country leaving in its wake injured, maimed, killed, as well as harrassed and intimidated individuals. Cases in point include electoral violence in in the first decade and more prominent in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 and to a smaller extent in 2013. Not to forget the tragic state-sponsored Gukurahundi exercise which claimed the lives of an estimated 20 000 civilians. The list goes on and on.
- Rampant human rights violations across the spectrum – civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. ZPP reports for 2015 show that at least 4957 people fell victim to human rights viotations in 2528 recorded cases. These numbers are too large for a free country where the expectation is that the general populace would freely enjoy their rights.
- Closing of democratic space by repressive laws including Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Crimininal Codification Act, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), among a slew of others
- Abductions that occur every now and then, depriving victimised citizens of their liberties and at times their lives; as well as depriving families of their loved ones.
- The failure of government to provide employment (decent work) for citizens
- The holding of hostage of economic development and other processes by politics. Almost everything is politicised at the expense of the citizens. Resources are politicised, state institutions are politicised, state apparatus like Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, security forces, among others, are politicised. Parastatals are politicised and militarised. A host of other entities and processes are hardly apolitical resulting in a very thin line, sometimes invisible, between state and party.
- Even food and input distributions are politicised, as are education assistance instruments, including the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM).
- The displacement of 73 462 vendors and confiscation of goods worth \$579 239 (Stats from Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation [Viset])

- House demolitions in a number of areas leaving thousands of people homeless and desperate. And most critical the Murambatsvina clean up exercise of 2005
- The failure of government to provide a social safety net for its citizens. Schools, hospitals, clinics and other services are far below minimum standards
- Failure of government to provide safe and adequate water, generate steady supply of electricity, build, repair and provide infrastructure such as roads and others
- Failure of government to plan strategically ahead and not find itself with starving masses when droughts or other mishaps occur. The four million who face starvation today on the back of the El Nino induced drought would not be starving if government had planned well ahead and shown more fiscal responsibility and sufficient care and concern for the citizens.
- Failure of the executive to foster a culture of Constitutionalism. The Constitution has been reduced to a paper tiger and hundreds of laws remain not harmonised with the Supreme Charter, three years after it came into being.

All the above are NOT what the liberation struggle was about. This is contrary to what the war stood for. The liberation struggle was so that the citizens of this country would have freedom with all the attendant civil liberties; that the masses would equitably enjoy and benefit from the resources of this country; that peace and harmony would prevail.

May all, the leaders and the led, ensure the purpose and the gains of independence are truly upheld. Anything else less than that negates the essence of the Chimurenga.

May Independence truly mean what it is supposed to mean for the citizens – self determination with dignity, justice, development and peace for all. /// ENDS